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INFO EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 001677

SIPDIS

AMEMBASSY ANKARA PASS TO AMCONSUL ADANA
AMEMBASSY ASTANA PASS TO AMCONSUL ALMATY
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL LEIPZIG
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/12/04

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAO](#) [NATO](#) [MARR](#) [GR](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: GREECE: ENGAGEMENT ON OUR AFGHANISTAN MESSAGE

REF: A.) STATE 123222, B.) STATE 122731, C.) ATHENS 1665

CLASSIFIED BY: Daniel V. Speckhard, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY. Embassy Athens took advantage of the Deputy Secretary's October 1-2 visit to press the Greek government for greater contributions in Afghanistan, and reinforce with the media the themes in the President's December 1 announcement. In a bilateral meeting October 2 with Greek PM Papandreou, the Deputy Secretary outlined our new Afghan strategy, shared thoughts on Pakistan, and urged strong support from Allies, including Greece. A/S Gordon, traveling with the Deputy, reinforced our thinking and the need for Greece to do more in Afghanistan with Alternate Foreign Minister Droutsas on December 1. Ambassador Speckhard had earlier pressed our case with Defense Minister Venizelos (reftel C). On the public affairs side, the Deputy Secretary conducted a press roundtable with international wire services, a television interview, and gave an exclusive interview to one of the largest Greek dailies. The Ambassador will discuss Afghanistan with one of northern Greece's most prominent papers on December 7. PM Papandreou did not issue a statement supporting the President's announcement, which came while Papandreou was consumed with OSCE Chairman duties. We will continue to press. Increasing ISAF support remains a tough sell with both the Greek government and public but the Prime Minister has indicated the desire to do more on the humanitarian and civilian side. Greek media gave mixed coverage to the President's announcement. END SUMMARY.

ON THE POLICY SIDE

12. (C) Building on the Ambassador's November 27 session with MOD Venizelos for more Greek support to ISAF, Deputy Secretary Steinberg on December 2 reinforced the President's Afghanistan message from the night before with PM Papandreou. Looking at ISAF, he emphasized the need for Allied support, and noted that a strong signal from Allies like Greece would provide a buoy for the President's plan with the U.S. domestic audience. PM Papandreou indicated that Greece would try to do more on what he termed the "second track," with more training and other civilian efforts, and would provide public support to the President's efforts. Septel to follow. A/S Gordon pursued the same track in a meeting the prior day with Alternate FM Droutsas; Droutsas had no substantive

comments on Afghanistan. (Comment: as of December 4, we have seen no public statements of support from Papandreou or his Ministers. Papandreou and Droutsas were both consumed with OSCE Chairman duties during the December 1-2 Ministerial they hosted in Athens. We will raise the need for this again. Military contributions to ISAF are a tough sell in Greece, though humanitarian and other assistance less so. End comment.)

ON THE PUBLIC SIDE

13. (U) On the public affairs side, the Deputy Secretary conducted a press roundtable with international wire services, a television interview with major broadcaster Hellenic Public Television, and gave an exclusive interview to one of the largest Greek dailies, To Vima, which is set to run Sunday, December 6. The Ambassador will discuss Afghanistan with one of northern Greece's most prominent papers on December 7. Future outreach for both the Ambassador and DCM is planned.

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14. (U) Greek press had mixed coverage on the President's announcement. Center-left Ta Nea carried a prominent inside local report under the headline: "Obama Plan Raises Concerns; Afghanistan: Mixed Reactions in EU, USA to the Deployment of 30,000 Troops." Ta Nea also carried Friedman's column from The New York Times under the headline: "This I Believe." Respected independent Kathimerini noted General McChrystal's satisfaction with the decision, but underlined the Taliban's response that the additional forces will strengthen the "determination" of Afghan Taliban to fight against them. The same paper also highlighted NATO Secretary General Rasmussen's remark that at least 5,000 additional troops should be deployed by NATO member states. Center-left Ethnos carried a prominent inside local report under the headline: "Obama Address on Afghanistan; Deploys 30,000 New Rambos; Deployment Coupled with Commitment for Withdrawal Starting July 2011; Taliban Threaten More Coffins." Internet portal www.in.gr reported that NATO Ministers will extensively discuss the Afghanistan situation in their upcoming Brussels Ministerial in light of the Obama speech. Others, like www.nooz.gr, focused on the Taliban response/threat to strengthen their fight against coalition forces. Flash Radio focused on international media comments drawing parallels between Afghanistan and Vietnam. Many newspapers focused on the risk to the Obama Presidency of sending troops to Afghanistan and the importance of the outcome to his re-election. Speckhard